

The Invictus Initiative by manchu2018

Series: The Invictus Initiative [1]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: F/M

Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Original Female Characters, Original Male Character(s), Will Byers

Relationships: Eleven | Jane Hopper/Mike Wheeler, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair, Will Byers/Original female character

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Summary:

The Party goes on a trip to London England to attend an international science fair competition. Trouble of course is attracted to them like a magnet. Adventure and shenanigans await.

1. Chapter 1

Prologue

“How in the hell did I get myself into this mess?” said Maxine “Max” Mayfield as she ran down a busy London street on a sunny afternoon. She glanced quickly over her shoulder and saw a man in a jogging suit and another in business attire racing after and slowly gaining on her. Max considered herself headstrong and reckless at times but not flat out crazy and this stunt she thought would certainly fall in the latter category.

But Max was the latest proud member of the Party and if a Party member needed assistance she was duty bound to provide that assistance (that's what Dustin always said, but somehow his fat ass isn't the one running) she thought with a smirk. If she could buy time for the other Party members to escape then it was all worth it. Max yelled “get outta the way!” as she bumped into startled onlookers who stopped and watched the spectacle unfolding in front of them.

Max was rapidly losing both hope and the footrace when she saw what she considered to be divine intervention; a boy holding a skateboard in his hands as he tried to avoid the fiery redhead charging towards him. In one swift motion she snatched the skateboard mumbling “sorryillgiveitback” in one rushed breath. Max had no idea how she would actually give it back but figured it the thought that counts, that's what her mother always said.

Max noticed a truck slowly pulling away from its parked position and thought “if it worked for Marty McFly it can work for me”. Max had seen “Back to the Future” numerous times and had relished the opportunity to pull the stunt Marty had accomplished. Max dropped the skateboard on the ground, hopped on it and grabbed the back-left edge of the truck, crouching just the way Michael J Fox did it in the movie.

To Max's surprise (and joy) she actually controlled herself on the skateboard and more importantly she was putting distance between her and her would be captors. The strange sight of a girl grabbing the side of a truck on a skateboard was enough to draw screams (of both

delight and horror) from the onlookers and was also enough to get the attention of the local police who started to run towards her as well.

As the skateboard started to shake violently and the driver finally looked in his passenger side mirror, Max decided to let go and coast on the skateboard, turning onto another street. To Max's chagrin, she underestimated her speed as she turned the corner and needed to crouch low in order to maintain control.

She also failed to consider that the vehicles in London traveled on the opposite side of the road than in the United States. This circumstance had her immediate attention as while she turned the corner, Max found herself careening full speed into a double decker bus. As the grille of the bus quickly approached her Max ruefully thought once again: "How in the hell did I get myself into this mess?"

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

The Party lands in London and trouble isn't too far behind.

Private eyes
They're watching you
They see your every move
Private eyes
They're watching you
Private eyes
They're watching you watching
You watching you watching you
Why you...
Hall & Oates

Three Days Earlier

Spring 1985

"I can't believe we're in London!" exclaimed Dustin as he exited the airplane. "Don't know why, you only said it about 236 times" grumbled Lucas as he followed his curly haired friend off the plane. Max gently nudged Lucas saying, "Ah give him a break Stalker, you know you're excited too." Lucas looked at Max and smiled knowing the redhead was right, he was excited but not so excited that he kept repeating himself and sounding like a moron. "Nice to know you cared enough to count Lucas, add one more to the count, I can't believe we're in London!" Lucas shook his head and groaned but understood why Dustin was amazed.

Lucas was also shocked when he received word that he, Will, Mike and Dustin had been selected to participate in the International Science Fair competition, but not as shocked as his science teacher Mr. Clarke. Clarke knew the boys had talent when it came to scientific ability but thought that their latest efforts had been lacking. Mr. Clarke had been sympathetic and understood that focusing on anything given the recent events with the power outages and the weird disappearance and then reappearance of Will would be enough to distract the most driven student.

So, it was to Mr. Clarke's surprise and delight when he received a letter from the international science fair committee informing him that his students and their friends and family had been invited to London. Mr. Clarke walked ahead of the group making his way to the main level to meet with his liaison to get transportation to the hotel.

As Lucas and Dustin bickered, Will walked quietly, content to take in all the sights and sounds of London's Heathrow airport. Will was also amazed to be in London, but his amazement stemmed from the fact his mother let him go. The past year was a tough one for the Byers family (to put it mildly) and Joyce barely allowed him to leave the house, so a trip to London was about as well received as another visit from the Mind Flayer. Will managed to talk his way into the trip by slyly manipulating Joyce's burgeoning relationship with Chief Hopper. Will was especially pleased with himself on how he actually convinced Hopper to come on the trip himself and bring El along for good measure (and Mike's sanity).

Jim Hopper walked slightly behind Will, wondering how in the hell he let the unassuming boy talk him into this. Hopper had to give him credit, everyone underestimates how smooth and convincing Will could be and he would be the first to admit he underestimated Will's talents. Jim remembered the day Will walked into his station and explained how he wanted to go to London.

"Mr. Hopper I need your help", Will said breathlessly as he entered Hoppers office. "I want to go with my friends to London, but my mom is freaking out about it and there is no way she lets me go." Hopper stared at Will for a moment and asked, "First off you know you can call me Jim, right? And what does this have to do with me kid?" Will paused for a moment and answered, "Well I know she listens to you, and I know you like her". Hopper immediately begins to object but Will stops him cold; "Before you get say I'm imagining things let me just say I'm cool with it and so is Jonathan. You helped out our family and saved my life and I can't think of a better guy for my Mom."

Will's admission catches Hopper off guard and leaves him stunned. Hopper didn't think he was being that obvious when it came to Joyce, but he admitted to himself what he felt for her was far more than simple friendship. Will added, "If you could come with us to

London I'm sure she would let me go, and also this would be a perfect opportunity to test out El's passport".

Hopper mentally kicked himself for telling Joyce and the boys about El's birth certificate and passport that Dr. Owens had forged for El or as the passport and birth certificate stated Jane Hopper. He knew that it would be used against him, but not this smoothly by Will Byers of all people. Hopper also knew that it made sense. He would have to test it to see if El was truly free. It also wouldn't hurt to get "brownie points" with Joyce and her smile was worth its weight in gold to Hopper.

Joyce was shocked when Hopper told her he would be willing to chaperone Will and the rest of the Party as they traveled to London. She reluctantly said yes much to Will's delight. As he left to go grab his supercom walkie talkie to tell the Party he was cleared to travel, Hopper and Joyce both looked at each other with a knowing look: "Your boy is a smooth operator, wonder who he learned that from?" Joyce put on an innocent look and said, "Beats me".

Hopper pulled himself from his memories and looked over at El who was looking at the different shops and the airport in awe. She remained glued to Mike's side as he explained the different parts of the airport. Mike and El had been almost inseparable since the Snow Ball dance. They surprised their friends and Hopper at times with their seeming devotion to each other. Hopper knew about young love having experienced it himself and he knew just how fleeting it was, especially involving young teens. But Hopper also surmised that those young teens had experienced things that most adults would not be able to handle or understand, so if these kids found something special between themselves, then he hoped they held on with all their might. He knew Mike was a good kid, and honestly loved El but since El was now officially his daughter, he planned to have a little talk which must include the obligatory shotgun on a table. It was basically a rite of passage and Mike was damn sure going get a taste of it. Hopper thought Mike should consider himself fortunate; if Mike had behaved like Hopper did as a kid, the gun would have been loaded.

Mike thought he couldn't possibly be any happier. The unspoken leader of the Party was in another country with his best friends and the girl of his dreams next to him. Mike's demeanor had changed drastically since El returned which resulted in better grades and

better D&D campaigns. When he was missing El the campaigns were a bit subpar; no one else had the heart to tell him since they knew he was depressed.

El was happy to finally be with Mike on a regular basis instead of sporadic visits and conversations on her supercom. Hopper bought her one after much pleading and arguing and it helped ease the sting of Mike not being with her person. She was still quiet and did not smile much but did enjoy being with her friends. Even Max. El and Max had a brief chat resolving their disagreement concerning Mike. El's hostility decreased as she saw Max and Lucas begin their relationship and Max explained how she and Mike were just acquaintances at the time. She even detailed how Mike was rude to her and did not want her involvement in the Party. Mike apologized for his rudeness and all involved settled their grievances.

Where Will's mother was a bit overprotective, the same could not be said for Max's parents. Frankly she didn't think her mother gave a shit if she said she was running away to join a brothel. Her stepbrother Billy would probably have driven her to the whorehouse himself if it meant ridding himself of the troublesome teen. The two have manufactured an uneasy peace between them ever since Max drugged and then threatened him. Billy would never admit it out loud, but he gained respect for Max and even some for Lucas who didn't back down from him.

The group soon made it the baggage claim area where Mr. Clarke met three people. A man in a fancy looking navy blue suit shook Mr. Clarke's hand and said "Welcome everyone, I am Alex Peters, I'm on the science fair committee and I will guide you all back to the hotel. You will meet the other members of the committee at the hotel this afternoon". The other two men helped everyone load their bags and Max's trusty skateboard into the van.

As the group made their way to waiting van, they all failed to notice one particularly interested observer who watched the group leave the airport. After the van left the observer approached a car with two others inside. "That's the group from Hawkins. Those are the ones we were told about". The duo both nodded and pulled away behind the van at a safe distance in which they could follow unnoticed.

As the van carrying the group traveled to the hotel, the Party took in some of the sights as they saw the famous Big Ben clock and Buckingham Palace. Soon the van stopped at the Grosvenor Hotel

where the science fair competition also taking place at. The group made their way into the event area where they saw large gathering of children from different schools around the world chatting with each other and in some cases fighting to stay awake.

Mr. Clarke led his students and their friends to a row of seats and after a few moments a rather attractive middle-aged woman went to the podium. “Hello everyone, my name is Susan Stern and on behalf of the International science fair committee I welcome you all to 20th annual International Excellence in Science competition!” A brief round of applause rippled through the hall.

“The schedule has been given to your teachers and they talk to you about the sequence of events for science fair. I won’t keep you here too long since I know some of you have had long flights. I am going to introduce the panel that will be walking amongst you all grading the exhibits. Some of you have already met Mr. Alex Peters our newest member of the committee, the rest of the panel is standing next to me. Jeremy Dunn, Pieter Loughlin and Idris Elifor.” The people waved at the crowded as Susan called their names. “We will get into the formal portions of the competition tomorrow. The rest of the afternoon is yours. Have fun and enjoy London everyone!”

As the other students filed out of the event hall, Dustin ran to the front door and out onto the sidewalk. The rest of the Party followed him outside looking very confused. Lucas was the first to see Dustin walking around a tall blue box looking object. Lucas groaned “Oh come on man you have got to be kidding me!” Dustin ignored him looking around the object marked police box, “Shit guys do you know what this is?” Mike looked at him and said slowly “A Police box?” Lucas snorted saying “It damn sure isn’t a time machine Obi Wan KADOPNEY!” The rest of the Party laughed at the joke with Will mimicking the legendary Princess Leia, “Obi Wan Kadopey you’re my only hope!” as he and Max looked at Dustin with fake desperation.

“Ha ha very funny” Dustin said as he opened the Police box door to look inside. Hopper walked outside and asked “What the hell is D&D boy doing over there? You know what? Never mind, grab him and let’s go find some dinner.” Dustin turned around saying “Hey guys it really is bigger on the ins-““Dustin c’mon!” yelled Mike. Dustin reluctantly walked away from the box muttering “Son of a Bitch!”

The KGB operative known as Sasha watched the throng of children and their parents and friends, leave the event hall and thought there must be some mistake. The group from Hawkins Indiana did not seem to be anything special but Sasha knew appearances could be deceiving. Sasha was one of the better agents the KGB had ever produced and highly efficient at accomplishing any task. Sasha had developed a source within the Hawkins laboratory and it had been very simple. Almost too easy. No one ever looked at a person who had placement and access to the facility at almost any time and whom no one ever truly questioned. The janitor. Sasha researched the cleaning crew and found one had a gambling habit. It was child's play to manipulate the source into spying for the KGB and getting information on a peculiar project called the Invictus Initiative.

The reporting Sasha received was almost too incredible to believe; children with powers, other dimensions, at one point Sasha thought the fool had lost his mind. But what if the source was correct? Sasha had to be prepared for any circumstance. And if these children were more than they appeared to be Sasha was going to find out what makes them special and exploit it.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

Preparations for the science fair, some self doubt, bitchiness, and a new player seeking information about the Invictus Initiative.

Notes for the Chapter:

Just a brief note in case everyone isn't familiar but the mentioning of Susan, her grandfather, and the Coal Hill school are references to the famous British show Doctor Who.

Reaching out to touch a stranger
Electric eyes are everywhere
See that girl, she knows I'm watching
She likes the way I stare
If they say why, why
Tell them that it's human nature
Michael Jackson

Chapter 3

"This is a horrible hotel!" grumbled El as she poked at her breakfast as the Party ate at the hotel restaurant. El was annoyed that there were no Eggo waffles on the menu. "Eh it isn't that bad, but I don't know why the waiter called it a fry up" said Lucas as he munched on his bacon. "I read that's considered slang over here" Dustin said as he finished off his breakfast with one final gulp of orange juice. Hopper leaned back in his chair immensely satisfied with his breakfast.

Hopper was pleased at his decision to take some time off and come to London. He couldn't remember the last time he actually had a chance to relax and do some sightseeing. (In 48 hours however, the events that occur changes his mind and makes him decide he never wanted to see London again). Hopper spoke to the Party urging them to hurry up, so they can get their project and bring it to the event hall.

Will got up from the table saying, "Hoppers right we gotta hustle

before the other kids jam up the elevators". Mike nodded "Ok let's move". Fifteen minutes later the Party brought in the storyboards and other items needed for their science project detailing the conservation of linear momentum and Newton's third law. The Party picked a project that could get every member involved and since the demonstration contained the use of skateboards Max was totally invested.

As they made their way through the door, Will felt a shove in the back and he lost his balance dropping his backpack, paperwork and the second skateboard needed for the project. A female voice with a British accent came from behind a massive cardboard box "Ouch oh goodness, I'm so sorry! I'm such a klutz! Are you alright?" Will looked up into the eyes of the girl behind the box as she extended her hand out to help him to his feet. The girl's four companions went over to help but the pretty brunette shook her head. "Go take the box over there and I'll catch you up." "Ok" a tall dark-skinned boy responded. Will assured the girl he was fine saying "Oh don't worry, I've had far worse spills than that."

The girl responded "Well I insist that I help you with your things. Its my fault that your papers are scattered everywhere" She went and begun grabbing the strewn papers as Will kept protesting that it wasn't necessary. Mike and El came over to see why Will had not made it to their designated area and saw the paperwork on the floor. "Hey Will, everything ok?" said Mike "Yep I'm good, just a little accident is all" Will replied. "Oh, by the way meet, umm I never got your name" The girl looked up and smiled "My name is Melissa, but my friends call me Millie".

After the science presentation was set up the Party made their way over to Millie and her friends as they put the finishing touches on their project. Millie greeted them warmly and introduced her friends. The dark-skinned boy was named Julius, a petite blonde named Kelly, and boy/girl twins Alan and Alexis. They all exchanged pleasantries as Adam announced they were from the Coal Hill school. Dustin immediately perked up: "Excuse me? Did you say Coal Hill?" Lucas knowing what his friend was getting at groaned "C'mon man not this again". "Yes why?" said Alan, "Um you wouldn't happen to have a girl named Susan go to your school, do you?" Julius looked at

him as if he grew a third eye. “Yeah mate, there are a lot of Susan’s here. Oh, wait do you mean the one with the dodgy old grandfather? Stays in a junkyard yeah?” Dustin’s eyes widened for a moment before Julius said, “Nope never heard of that Susan” as everyone chuckled. “Whatever” grumbled Dustin.

Kelly looked at Dustin sympathetically “You won’t believe how many times we get that” Millie chimed “What are you all doing this afternoon? We can show you all around if you like, starting with a spot that’s the most important. The arcade!” That got a bunch of smiles from everyone in the group. Will walked over to where Hopper and Mr. Clarke were talking. “Hey, Hop er I mean Jim we met a bunch of local students who wanted to show us around. Mind if we go with them?” Hopper looked pensive for a moment then added “Sure but you I’m coming with you all. No arguments”.

As Will trotted off tell his friends the good news Hopper looked around the event hall and saw several photographers and staff walking by and one in particular caught his attention. The man looked sort of disheveled with a tattered looking jacket and glasses. Nothing stood out about the man, but Hopper had the feeling he had seen him somewhere before. Hopper turned to see the kids heading out the door and went off to join them.

Duncan Smythe wondered to himself who did he piss off to get this shitty assignment. Looking at kids at a science project. Smythe had been an operative for MI6 for almost ten years, ever since he left military service. He thought life at MI6 would be like a James Bond movie with guns, gadgets, and girls galore. Duncan didn’t get the gadgets, definitely had some gunplay and for one fleeting moment actually got the girl. Until fate came and took it all away from him.

Duncan saw the rest of the students from the other schools and thought about his own lost daughter. She would have been their age had she lived. He thought of the day he met his future bride, sitting at a train station, having just arrived in London from the US. She was a medical student at the Imperial Medical College of London. She was sitting at the station trying to figure out how to get to the school when he offered his assistance. It was love at first sight and the romance blossomed over time.

When his wife gave birth to his daughter Naomi, it was the best day

of his life. He marveled at how blessed he was; a good career and a great family. He was on assignment in Nigeria when he received word that his wife and daughter were killed in a car accident. A truck ran through a light and hit the car, flipping it over. Onlookers tried to get them out, but fuel was leaking from the car, a slight spark from the engine was all it took for the car to turn into a burning coffin.

Duncan's career took a turn for the worse as he was often cited for insubordination, resulting in less than appealing assignments, such as this one. Duncan was notified by his leadership that something was in the works and it involved these children from Indiana. Duncan had his surveillance team on them the moment they left the airport, and it was nothing to go back to his old cover of a newspaper photographer. Simple and inconspicuous, that was the way to go for this operation.

What intrigued Duncan was the rumors that the KGB was also interested, up to the point that they sent in Sasha. It was unlikely these kids from Hawkins had anything to do with the mysterious Invictus Initiative, but they still decided to invest personnel and time into going after these kids. Duncan had heard of Sasha years ago; no one knew who Sasha was or whether Sasha was male or female. All he knew was that Sasha was effective and a giant pain in the ass. The operative has eyes almost everywhere and anyone who may have come across Sasha usually ends up dead or missing. If Sasha was really going to make a move on the Hawkins kids, then he and his team would be ready. While Duncan moved around the hall he noticed a man looking at him intently.

At first glance, Duncan thought he knew the man but he wasn't so sure. The man looked like his old acquaintance Jim Hopper, but that couldn't be; Jim Hopper wasn't that fat, last time he saw him. Duncan began to feel unease at the man glaring at him and went back to taking pictures. After they left he pulled a radio out of his jacket pocket and notified his surveillance team; they were on the move again.

A half hour later the combined group of Coal Hill and Hawkins Middle school students were embroiled in a video game battle. Some of the students were challenging each other on Dragons Lair, the others were playing Ms. Pac Man and Dig Dug. It was mainly Max

conquering at Dig Dug while the others marveled at her skill. “Unreal” said Alan as he gawked at the score Max was putting up. “That’s nothing, I think she’s going easy on you all” Lucas said with a grin. “She’s done much worse to us, as a matter of fact the first time we met she had just placed the top score on the game”.

Dustin let out a yell as he died (again) on Dragons Lair. “This shit is rigged I’m telling you!” Julius gave him a cocky look “Watch it now mate, let a proper player show you how its done”. Five minutes later he slammed his hand down on the game in disgust. “Bloody rigged is what it is” Dustin said with a smirk “Oh is that what you call proper playing? Let me take some notes on how to die without dignity in this game”.

Mike was playing Ms. Pac Man with Millie, El and Will standing close by watching and chatting. Millie was telling a story about life at the Coal Hill school which El listened to intently. El had wondered what it would be like to go to school one day and she pushed herself to study and learn at a quicker pace so that she may join her friends in school one day. Kelly stood next to Mike as he played getting close to him to throw him off his game. Kelly had done quite well when she played but Mike was a pro. “Not bad Mike but this is going to get a bit tricky. I don’t think you have takes.” she murmured in a low sultry tone.

Mike chuckled, “I got more than enough to top your score, and you know it.” “Oh, do I now?” Kelly slowly intertwined her arm with Mike’s causing him to lose his concentration just enough to cost him a life as he yelled. “Hey no fair! You cheated!” “I did no such thing, I just leaned in closer to see the game” Kelly said with a look of exaggerated innocence. “Whatever, oh it’s on now One more game.” Kelly admired his determination “Maybe in a bit”. Kelly hi fived Millie saying, “Another one bites the dust”, which makes Mike sulk a bit more. El went and held Mike’s hand “Calm down Mike, its just a game”.

Millie walked with Kelly over to the Dig Dug game looking at her with concern “Look Kelly, these guys are cool with us, don’t go starting trouble.” Kelly stared at her “I’m not doing anything.” “Oh really, I see you basically flirting with Mike, and you know Jane is his girlfriend” “Pfft you mean plain Jane, the one who rarely speaks. I

think she's mental if you ask me" Millie pulled her friend to a corner in the arcade, "Kelly I mean it, cut the shit, Jane is a nice person, I think she may have been abused or something, maybe that's why she's so quiet." "Ok ok, I get it." Kelly relented. "No bothering the weird girl. Besides I don't need her crying to daddy." Kelly of course had no intention of behaving or going easy on anyone. She was used to getting her way. What was Jane going to do? She looks like she doesn't know what planet she's on half the time, Kelly thought derisively. Besides Mike was kind of cute, and she liked a challenge.

El saw her friends mingling with the Coal Hill students and felt a sense of embarrassment and if she was honest with herself, some envy. El didn't understand what it felt like to be so carefree. All she knew was pain, terror and death. She was thankful that her friends (and in particular Mike) came into her life and gave her the family she never had, but it was interactions like this that made her feel the most awkward.

The girls Kelly, Millie and Alexis were so pretty and smart, what do I have to offer? El thought sadly. El walked outside the arcade to be alone with her morose thoughts. Outside she saw Hopper smoking a cigarette enjoying the London atmosphere (and keeping an eye out for any trouble). "Everything ok kid?" El nodded "I'm fine" Hopper knew better but decided he wasn't going to pry.

Max came outside the arcade looking at El with a confused look, "What are you doing out here? You missed me kicking ass at Dig Dug." El looked at Max eyes shining with unshed tears, "Just wanted some air". "Oh bullshit, or as you all say, "friends don't lie" so start talking. Did somebody do something to upset you? "said Max, her temper rising. "No Max, its just that those girls are pretty and they're smart. What if Mike wants someone like them? I don't want him to stay with me because he feels sorry for me." Hopper overheard the conversation and decided to give them a little privacy by walking across the street to the market to grab more cigarettes.

"Well El, you definitely got the looks, but you aren't that smart if you don't think Mike loves you. Have you seen the way he looks at you? It's downright sickening, trust me." Max said earning a chuckle from El. "So you haven't had what is considered a "normal" childhood, neither have I. When I first got to Hawkins I was miserable. Psycho

stepbrother and parents who were at each other's throats. To top it off I also get the creepy stepdad who I swear is an undercover serial killer or something. But those nerds in there kept bothering me to join their stupid club, and I'm glad they did."

"I give Lucas shit, but I will always be grateful that he told me the truth of what happened, even though I thought he was lying his ass off, I was flattered that he would make up a story just so I could feel included. No one had ever gone out of their way to include me in anything and I will always love him for that. And if you tell him any of this I'll deny it." Max said if she held back tears of her own.

El smiled "He won't hear it from me". "So, my point is, it doesn't matter what other girls look like or how they behave or whatever, Mike has eyes for you only and we all love you." Max opened her arms and El went in for the hug. Mike came outside "Everything ok?" El looked at him with a smile, "Yes Mike, everything is ok." Mike looked skeptical, "Promise?" El smiled wider "Promise".

4. Chapter 4

Summary for the Chapter:

The day of the science fair has arrived, mistakes are made and plans are put into motion.

Notes for the Chapter:

I decided to add another chapter to the total since I didn't want one massive overlong chapter as a conclusion. Hope you all are still enjoying this little yarn. Feel free to leave comments if you like.

On the day I was born
The nurses all gathered 'round
And they gazed in wide wonder
At the joy they had found
The head nurse spoke up
Said "leave this one alone"
She could tell right away
That I was bad to the bone
George Thorogood

It was the day of the science competition and the Party to put it mildly, was a mess. They stayed up late into the night practicing what their presentation. Thanks to their late night the kids were sluggish in the morning and trying to get themselves moving. After helping the boys with their ties, Hopper ushered everyone downstairs to grab some breakfast but hardly any of them had any appetite. "Man, I can't wait to get this over with" said Lucas. "I haven't been this nervous in a long time. Hell, I don't think I was ever this nervous back home when presenting our science projects and this damn tie is killing me". Lucas loosened his tie and tucked his shirt deeper into his pants. Dustin chimed in "Yeah we just need to relax, the judges don't seem to be assholes, so I think if we sweet talk em and play it just right we'll win. And if we don't win I hope Coal Hill doesn't win". Mike looked at Dustin with a puzzled look, "Why not?" "Can you imagine dealing with those guys if they win again? Those guys will be unbearable. Outside of Millie, the rest of them are a bunch of

dicks". Dustin retorted. "Yeah I think you're still pissed about Dragons Lair" Mike scoffed.

The previous night at the arcade the Party learned the Coal Hill students had won the competition the previous year and although the Coal Hill students wished them luck, Dustin didn't believe it for a moment. Who wishes the competition well, and means it? The Party quickly finished their breakfast and headed to the event hall where they saw Mr. Clarke conversing with Susan, the committee chairwoman.

"Well I'm glad you finally had the opportunity to bring some of your students to the competition" Sue said with a smirk, "Hopefully they will do better than your class did against ours". To say Clarke and Susan did not care for one another would be a huge understatement. Mr. Clarke sighed "Well Im glad you still think about that after 25 years. So, what have you been doing all of these years? This chairwoman job isn't an everyday thing." "Oh, a little of this and a little of that. I teach at the Brookhaven institute in Leeds. Forging the scientific minds of the future." Susan said haughtily. Susan glanced at Clarke's students as they entered the event hall, "You have an interesting collection of students, very interesting. Good luck." Susan spun on her heel and left without a word. Mr. Clarke looked at her with a puzzled expression. Mr. Clarke always thought Susan was a bit odd, but this was a new bit of strangeness.

The students arrived at their designated area, going over any last-minute adjustments. Mike once again going over each section everyone was responsible for. Mr. Clarke addressed his students "I want you guys to try to relax. You know this stuff inside and out. I'm proud of you all, whether you win or lose. Just making it to this level, going against the best seven schools, with all that you went through, you embarked on your curiosity voyage and it led you to this point. It's simply amazing". Alex walked up to the students to wish them luck as he made the rounds to each exhibit before the competition began.

"Good luck everyone. I know you guys will do your best." Alex said with a smile. "Thanks sir", Mike said, thinking about what his science teacher said. The Party seemed to always defeat the odds and come out on top when everyone else seemed to count them out. Millie and

the rest of the Coal Hill students arrived in their school uniforms of white shirts, black cardigan sweaters with the Coal School insignia and black pants (for the boys, dresses for the girls). Will greeted Millie with a hug. "You look really nice". Millie blushed "Thanks Will you look dashing yourself. Did you sleep well?" "Um no not really, I was too wired up for that." Will replied. Kelly made her way over to Mike, "Good morning Mike" she said sweetly, "I was thinking about our game yesterday and after this event is over and we win, I'll let you get another shot at me" Kelly added a wink at that last remark and walked away as Mike stood there both annoyed and confused. "Yeah whatever" he mumbled.

El saw the exchange between Kelly and Mike as she greeted Julius, Alan and Alexis, and fought the urge to grab her by her neck and toss her out of the event hall. But she didn't want to jump to the wrong conclusion like she did with Max and Mike. El pulled Max away from the others and sought her advice. "What's up El?" Max said lowly. "I don't want to overreact like I did when I saw you with Max, but I think Kelly is trying to umm what's the word? Flit? Fl.. flirt, with Mike". Max looked over at Kelly, then back at El, "You sure? What makes you say that?" El looked pensive at Max, "I saw her looking and smiling at him, it looked different than when I saw you speaking with him at school".

Max thought about that time with her trying to get Mike to lighten up and treat her with less hostility. She wasn't flirting with him in any fashion, but she could understand why El would think so. "Look El, it may be totally harmless, we are in a different country and they may do things differently here. I'm sure there is a totally rational explanation for this". Max then looked over at Kelly who came over to personally hand Mike a bottle of water and as she did so casually brush the back of his hand and his fingers. Mike pulled his hand back and said something to Kelly while she gave a seductive smirk.

"And suddenly I can't think of one explanation at all. You know what? Forget what I just said, it's time to put this bitch in her place." Max said fuming. "Max wait, what are you going to do?" El asked, slightly fearful of just how far her fiery tempered friend would go; "I don't know El, I'll figure it out when I get there, hell you like soaps, do what Erica Kane does". El looked skeptical, "Doing what Erica

Kane does could get us kicked out of the country". "Oh, it would be worth it to slap the smugness right off her face". Max grabbed Kelly by her arm, "What exactly do you think you're doing? Kelly snatched her arm away and stepped nose to nose with the redhead.

"Oi, what's going on here?" Alan said jumping to his friend's defense. Lucas and Dustin raced to Max's side. "This twit is going after my friend's boyfriend." Max said. Kelly looked amused "I am not, I simply handed him some water. I heard you Americans always jump to the worst conclusions about people, but rest assured I don't want your boyfriend and if I did it wouldn't be too hard. Jane here can't even speak up for herself. That's why you're here instead of her."

El had to calm herself, she couldn't afford to get too angry and lose control. She walked up to Kelly slowly and said in a calm yet determined voice "Leave Mike alone, he's with me." Kelly was slightly taken aback by the fierce look on El's face. Kelly tried to sound more confident than she felt, "Oh is that right? I can barely hear you enough to take you seriously." El thought of a line from one of her favorite shows, "Kelly, don't make me angry, you wouldn't like me when I'm angry". Millie and Alexis pulled Kelly away and Max and Mike (who just arrived at the altercation) pulled El back.

"Oh shit, did you quote the Incredible Hulk? Badass!" Dustin said with a grin. "I guess I did" El said with a smile. Alan and Julius spoke with Lucas and Dustin for a moment as El headed back to the Party's display area. El turned to see Kelly arguing with Millie and Alexis and pointing in her direction. Kelly grabbed a cup of fruit punch that was being distributed by hotel staff before the event begun, looked at El and flipped her the bird.

El felt a surge of anger causing the lights to flicker slightly and the table to shake and as Kelly turned her back, El telekinetically pulled the punch from the cup and sprayed it into Kelly's face and blouse. Kelly screamed as the liquid stained her dress. The Coal Hill students looked in stunned disbelief as Kelly stormed out of the event area in tears and shock. Dustin and Lucas slowly turned to look at El who wore a triumphant look on her face. The Coal Hill student's science teacher gave instructions to his students as he checked on Kelly.

Mike quickly dabbed the speck of blood from El's nose with a napkin. "What are you thinking? You could have been spotted!" "I'm sorry

Mike, she made me so mad, and she was coming on to you. I know I shouldn't have let her to get to me, but I couldn't help it" El said looking more than a little ashamed. A waiter dropped off two cups of water, El grabbed one and gulped it down. "Forgive me?" "Yeah but Hopper is going to freak when he finds out" Mike says with a rueful grin.

True to form, Hopper did freak out as he saw the lights blink and the room slightly shake. "What the hell are you doing?" Hopper said as he pulled El away from the table. "From here on out you're staying with me and don't think of trying to argue." El knew from the tone of Hopper's voice that anything she said would be pointless. El went with Hopper to the back of the event hall with her arms folded in an act of defiance.

Ten minutes earlier, Sasha was frustrated beyond belief. Sasha had the Hawkins students under surveillance since the moment they touched ground in London and not a thing. Sasha had decided to take them all if necessary but that would be very messy, and Sasha was anything but messy. Suddenly a scream pierced the event hall, and the lights flickered. Onlookers turned to see where the sound came from and Sasha saw a blonde-haired girl walking away from her display area muttering about the punch jumping in her face. Sasha then looked at the Hawkins display area where the long-haired boy and girl stood. Sasha could have screamed in jubilation. The slight rumble in the room, lights flickering, strange happenings, it was true! The Invictus Initiative actually exists. Sasha immediately sprung into action. Sasha signaled a fellow operative and nodded towards the Hawkins display. Time was running out. It was time for action.

Ten minutes earlier, Duncan's mind was still reeling from news he received earlier, which made him getting to the bottom of the Invictus Initiative much more urgent. Duncan told his fellow agents to get in position and report anything odd immediately. As soon as he gave that instruction the lights flickered, and he heard a scream. Duncan moved to the location the scream came from to get a better look and saw a girl walking off crying and the Hawkins students looking stunned along with the Coal Hill students. Duncan noticed two Hawkins students were not with the others. Duncan glanced back at the table and saw a blood-stained napkin in the boy's hand. Duncan's mouth went dry. Blinking lights, blood stains, a cup looking

like it took a life of its own and emptying out its content on a person. It was all true. Duncan suddenly felt an overwhelming rush of anger. "Bloody fools, what the hell have you done?" Duncan thought. He blended back into the crowd and activated his wrist microphone "Keep an eye on the Hawkins students, if the KGB has sent Sasha here, and Sasha saw what I saw then we are out of time. Sasha will do whatever it takes to acquire them."

Susan spoke on the microphone trying to restore some order, "Ahem ladies and gentlemen please be seated, and we will begin the formal part of our competition." As the attendees took their seats, Susan continued "Welcome to International Science Fair competition. What you see here at the front of the event hall are eight schools recognized for their scientific ability and knowledge. The committee will be going to each display and the students will demonstrate and explain what the project is along with their translators if needed. Alex, Jeremy, Pieter and Idris will evaluate the students on their presentations and pick a winner. Ok let's see who is up first, ah the school from Brazil. Are you ready?"

Approximately an hour later the Party stood at their display slightly dejected but pleased with their performance. The Hawkins students came in second place behind a school called the Wakanda Academy from Nigeria. Mr. Clarke congratulated them on a job well done. He had to leave them in order to go over any last observations and how to obtain the official report of the event from the committee. The Party quickly disassembled the display and started to maneuver through the event hall. Lucas accidentally bumped into a blonde-haired man in an electrician outfit. "Sorry about that sir, I'm heading to the elevator". The electrician looked at him and smiled "No worries, and congratulations." "Thanks!" Lucas replied as he reached the elevator, with Dustin close behind him.

When they returned to the room Hopper said "Good work out there. You guys didn't bring in the trophy, but you did the best you could. So as a reward, how about I treat you guys to some ice cream or something?" Dustin, Lucas, Max all agreed to grab some ice cream but El said she wasn't going to go "I'm feeling really tired, so I will just take a quick nap". Mike of course wasn't going anywhere without El, "I'll stay here and keep an eye on her" he said. "That better be all

you're doing Wheeler" Hopper said which made everyone chuckle. Will also wanted to stay behind so he could get some souvenirs from the hotel gift shop. Plus, he wanted see Millie one last time who agreed to meet him at the gift shop. If he was being honest with himself, that was the primary reason he wanted to go down to the lobby.

After everyone changed into more comfortable clothes, Hopper, Lucas, Dustin and Max left the hotel to go to the ice cream parlor. Will headed downstairs to meet Millie and Mike was placing a blanket over El who was sound asleep. She must've been super tired, Mike thought as she snored slightly. Soon after exiting the hotel, Lucas noticed something very peculiar; as he passed a newsstand he glanced at the vendor and it looked just like the electrician he saw at the hotel. But his hair was different, instead of blonde it was black, and it looked as if it was a wig. Lucas pulled Max close to him whispering "Something funny is going on, I swear I've seen that guy earlier while we were packing up our displays." Lucas quickly looked around the area and had a sudden sense of paranoia. Lucas went to Hopper and prepared to tell him his observations, but Hopper simply looked at Lucas saying: "I know kid, we're being followed".

Mike was slowly nodding off himself while watching television when he heard a knock at the door. "Damn Will you are always forgetting something, forgot to bring a pen and some paper for her phone number?" As Mike opened the door he recognized the face he saw but it wasn't Will's, "Hey what are you doing here?" "Hello Mike" Sasha said with a steely gaze, "I see you didn't drink the water, a pity but I guess we do this the hard way". Mike saw Sasha's hand move like lightning, and a sharp prick on the left side of his neck. As Mike staggered backwards, his last thoughts before the darkness took him was of El and how he hoped to see her again.

5. Chapter 5

Summary for the Chapter:

The race is on for a superweapon. And the Party race for their lives.

You can't start a fire
You can't start a fire without a spark
This gun's for hire
Even if we're just dancing in the dark
Bruce Springsteen

"So, are you ready to head home Will?" asked Millie as she and Will walked around the gift shop. Will stopped for a moment to ponder the question. On one hand he was excited to be going back home, but more than a little sad that he would have to leave Millie behind. They had grown rather close over the last few days, and he was dreading not being able to see her again. "I don't know Millie, I'm kinda looking forward to it, but I really like spending time with you." Millie blushed as she looked at her feet; "That's sweet of you Will, and I am really sorry that Kelly behaved so poorly to Jane. I don't know what goes through her head".

Will grabbed some t shirts and a shot glass as souvenirs to bring home and as he approached the cashier he suddenly stopped. "Ah man I forgot my wallet!" Will said looking embarrassed. Will sighed as he put down the items saying, "I need to head back upstairs to grab it, do you want to come?" Millie looked at Will with a smirk, "Will Byers, are you trying to get me in your room?" Will looked mortified stammering "Uh no its not like that I promise!" Millie burst out laughing, "Man you should see how red your face is, you like you're about to explode." Millie chuckled a bit more before saying, "Well c'mon then." Will shook his head with a smile heading towards the stairs "Let's take the stairs. Its faster than waiting on the elevator and the room is on the third floor."

Sasha beckoned to the fellow KGB operatives to come in the room. They were dressed as hotel workers pushing in a large laundry cart with bed sheets inside them. Sasha had to hurry; the more time taken meant the more likely they would be seen. Sasha took pride on being

a verifiable ghost. “Hurry and put them in the cart.” Sasha said. Sasha was slightly annoyed that the boy didn’t drink any of the tainted water that an operative placed on the table.

After Sasha saw the incident take place with the blonde girl and the Hawkins kids, Sasha immediately told the operative to put two special glasses of water on their table. Obviously, the girl drank it, but the boy needed extra measures hence the needle. Sasha also made the decision to grab the rest of the Hawkins children. It would be messy, but no chances could be taken. Sasha didn’t know how many of the students were involved and they could always be used as leverage just in case someone became stubborn and did not want to cooperate.

Sasha radioed the surveillance personnel who were following Hopper and the rest of the Party. “When the opportunity arises take them, make it look like a mugging and kill the adult. Leave the kids alive.” Sasha then tossed a few things around to make it look like a thief had went through the occupant’s belongings. Better safe than sorry Sasha thought.

“I know kid we’re being followed” Hopper said as he, Max, Lucas and Dustin walked to the front of the ice cream parlor. Lucas mouth dropped slightly “How did you know?” he asked. “Don’t worry about that right now. The question is how many are following us.” Hopper was angry at himself. He should’ve suspected it sooner but seeing certain people in totally different locations at different times raised suspicion. “Who’s following us Lucas?” Dustin said his head turning left and right. “Stop doing that they’re going to know we’re on them. You gotta be discreet, like this.” Lucas said as he turned his head slowly to the right, looking obvious and a bit strange. “Oh, that was totally smooth Lucas, I mean one would barely notice you moved your head with that stupid look on your face.” Dustin said. Max left the bickering boys and asked Hopper “Ok so someone’s watching us, do you know which ones?” Hopper looked at her, “It can be any one of them”. “Well in that case I have an idea of how we can find out who a few of them are.” Max said with an evil glint in her eyes and smile on her face.

Will and Millie reached the third floor and as Will opened the stairwell door he froze for a moment. Two men in hotel uniforms

were leaving the room he shared with Mike and Hopper with two large drums which appeared to be filled with clothes. Following them out the room appeared to be a man who resembled Alex Peters, but why would he be leaving their room? Will immediately backed up into the stairwell and silently closed the door. "What's wrong? I have a big brother and his room is always trashed so a little bit of clothes is not going to bother me" Millie said. Will looked at her with an expression of barely concealed panic, "Shh that looks like Mr. Peters leaving the room, and those look like the biggest hotel bellhops I've ever seen in my life." "Why is Mr. Peters in your room?" Millie asked with growing concern. "I don't know" Will replied. But if Will did know one thing, he knew what trouble looked like, and this was trouble.

As a descendant of a member of the dreaded CHEKA secret police, Aleksandr Igorevich Petrovsky a.k.a. Alex Peters a.k.a. Sasha had a family with a prestigious lineage and some thought he used it to gain an advantage. That wasn't too far from the truth, but he had proven to be one of the better operatives in the KGB, so it wasn't just familial ties that put Alex in a higher position than most. Sasha used the Americanized version of his name as a clever jab to enemy counterintelligence operatives out to thwart him. No one would ever expect him to do something so over the top. His backstop of being a new member of the science committee was perfect. It allowed him to move in plain sight and gave him time to come up with a plan to acquire the target.

Sasha thought he felt eyes on him and quickly looked towards the stairwell where Will and Millie hid, seeing nothing he entered the elevator with his two associates and looked at the two drums filled with more than just dirty linen. Sasha pulled out his radio and barked instructions in Russian. "Bring the van around to the back, we have two deliveries to pick up."

After the elevator closed Will raced to his room to see his worst fear confirmed. The room ransacked with Mike and El both missing. "What in the world is going on Will?" Millie asked looking exasperated and a bit fearful. "Alex has them." Will answered. "Why would he do that? And was he with those men?" Will took a deep breath and reacted quickly. He scribbled a note detailing what he saw and raced to the stairwell heading to the first floor. They won't head

out the front door like that Will thought. Will ran to the concierge desk.

“Excuse me where is the service entrance?” “Down the hall to the left” the concierge replied. Will ran through the laundry room slowing down to see if Alex or his cronies were near. Not seeing anyone Will went to the service dock to see a white van with the hotel name on the side take off. Will spotted Alex in the passenger seat as the vehicle turned onto the intersection. What am I going to do now? Will thought feeling helpless.

“Hey stalker I got an idea, probably a bad one but it’s all I got right now.” Max told a confused Lucas. “What are you talking about Max?” Lucas said. Max quickly kissed him and took off at a sprint. As Max raced down the street Hopper saw two people take off after her. Hopper grabbed the boys and ran in the same direction as Max but quickly turning on a side street. “Where are we going?” Dustin panted as he ran down the side street. “We’re going to link up with Max two blocks over, then head back to the hotel.” Hopper said.

To be honest he wasn’t in the best shape himself. He hoped he had enough in him to make it to the intersection they were supposed to rejoin Max at. Hopper looked over his shoulder and not seeing anyone decides to cut into an alleyway, hoping it would save time and perhaps surprise Max’s pursuers. The group heard a horn blare in the distance a screech of tires. Lucas, fearing the worse yelled “Max!” and ran faster. “Slow down kid!” Hopper yells. To Hoppers surprise a man wear a jogging suit runs into the alleyway headlong into Hopper and the boys. As Hopper slows down he sees the man pull out a gun “Hello Tovarisch “he said with a smile raising his weapon. “Oh Shit” Hopper, Lucas, and Dustin all chorused.

Max saw the grille of the double decker approaching quickly and the blare of the horn. Without thinking Max leapt off the skateboard landing roughly on her right shoulder and tumbling into a row of trash cans like a bowling ball knocking over pins. Max heard the bus hit the skateboard with a sickening crunch.

Thanks to her extensive experience on a skateboard (which included a lot of falls) Max knew how to tuck and roll to an extent she wasn’t too badly injured, but she was still stunned. The two men pursuing her stood over her panting “You are the craziest little girl I’ve ever come across” one of them said. The other spoke into his wrist radio,

"We have the girl, boss". Max couldn't do anything but groan as she tried to sit up, guess that didn't work she thought wincing in pain. Will continued to look on helplessly as the van containing Mike and El traveled further and further away from him. "Taxi!" Millie yelled as she almost threw herself in front of a cab. "Get in! Hurry!" she yelled at Will breaking him out of his panic induced haze. Will jumped in the back seat with Millie as she explained to the cabbie "Follow the white van yeah? The one with from the hotel, umm my uncle is in there and I have to catch up to him." The cabbie gave her a look of disbelief but proceeded to follow the van as Millie pulled out some pounds. "Ah man I still left my wallet Millie," Will said. "Pay me later but first we have to get to that van." Millie replied.

After what seemed to be an eternity, Will and Millie saw the van turn into a warehouse district. Millie instructed the cabbie to stop about 100 meters away from a run-down building which the van stopped in front of. After paying the cabbie, Will and Millie walked to the back of an adjacent building. "Ok what next?" Millie asked. "I don't know. I'm thinking" Will said peeking around the corner. After watching Alex and his two companions unload the drums and take them into the building, Will and Millie approached the location. Will quickly scurried around the building looking for another way inside.

The warehouse was the size of an aircraft hangar, and after walking halfway around the building the duo saw a window. Will wiped the grimy window with his hand and saw nothing but darkness on the inside. Taking a deep breath and building up his resolve, he turned to Millie saying "Here's what we're going to do. I'm going to go in, scope out the area and see where Mike and El are, you run to the nearest store you can find and call the police to let them know about the kidnapping".

Millie looked at Will as if he was from another planet. "Are you daft? They're going to spot you in a heartbeat! This is a shit idea Will" "You got any better ideas?" Will asked. "Yes, you come with me and we can both explain it" Millie said. "And if they move Mike and El no one is going to know where they are. Look believe it or not I've been through worse". Will said sounding more courageous than he felt. "We don't have time, now go get the police while Mike and El are still here."

Before opening the window, Will hugged and impulsively kissed Millie on the lips. Millie wore a look of surprise, then happiness as her face turned crimson. "In case I don't get another chance. Thanks for everything Millie" Will said, Millie quickly grabbed Will's face and kissed him. "As you Americans like to say, "for luck" right?" Will smiled was so wide he thought his face would split apart. "Ok Will off you go and for god's sake be careful" Millie then turned and proceeded to run back to the street in order to find a store with a phone.

Will landed in the warehouse quietly landing on the balls of his feet. Will told himself it would be easy to remain out of sight. After all, he avoided a monster in the upside down for weeks. If he could hide out in another dimension, he can damn sure hide out in huge warehouse. As Will moved stealthily behind rows of crates and boxes he entered through a pair of double doors. Hearing voices he kept close the wall and peered around the corner. Through the dim hallway lights Will saw Alex instructing the men to put the still unconscious forms of Mike and El in another room. Can't make out what he's saying, sounds like another language Will thought.

As the men left the room one of them turned in the looked in Will's direction. Shit. Will thought as he ducked his head back. Will heard the man say something to his partner then heard footsteps heading in his direction. Will quickly looked around for a place to hide. Will tiptoed back from where he came and saw a utility closet in the bay he climbed into. Will ran in the closet and tried to hide among the tools and equipment. His heart hammered like a runaway freight train as he prayed the man wouldn't look in the closet. Will put his hand over his mouth to keep from whimpering as he heard the door knob jiggle then turn. Will berated his idea as the worse one he ever had, Millie was right, what in the world was I thinking? The door opened as the man looked into the closet where Will was hiding.

6. Chapter 6

Summary for the Chapter:

The end of the adventure but the beginning of something more horrific.

Notes for the Chapter:

Thanks to everyone that read this little yarn. I figured I would go for something a little different so thanks for sticking with the story. I sort of envisioned this as a prologue to a bigger story which will serve as a sequel. The sequel will be a LOT darker and crazier. I'll see about posting the first chapter of that one soon.

Let me please introduce myself
I'm a man of wealth and taste
Pleased to meet you
Hope you guessed my name, oh yeah
But what's confusing you
Is just the nature of my game, mm yeah
The Rolling Stones

Hopper stood still with a look of horror on his face as the man in the jogging suit held a gun at Hoppers face. Lucas and Dustin shared the same looks of dread as Hopper thought quickly of how to possibly disarm the man. He had an idea; start stalling. “Damn I didn’t think the British do strong arm robbery in broad daylight. And they certainly don’t have Russian accents. You make a wrong turn on the way to St Petersburg? I suggest you make a left turn at Perestroika asshole.” As Hopper spoke he inched closer making sure the KGB operative’s focus was on him and not the boys. “You are a funny one, too bad your humor can’t make a bullet laugh” the operative said with a heavy Russian accent. Hopper saw the man’s finger tighten on the trigger as he prepared to squeeze. Hopper knew it was now or never and prepared to rush forward.

Will thought he felt his bladder and bowels both go at the same time

as the Russian peered into the closet squinting his eyes. "Dmitri! Come on Sasha is going to talk to the boy." a voice shouted in Russian from the adjacent hallway. Dmitri grunted and then went down the hall. Will let go of the breath he was holding and checked to see if he pooped his pants. Satisfied and somewhat amazed that he didn't, Will sat still for several moments gathering the courage to peel himself from the corner of the utility closet he stood in. Will slowly with trembling legs moved to open the door. He took a deep breath and exited the closet.

Mike awoke with a headache which raged as if someone was performing a drum solo on his brain. As his vision became less blurry he tried to make sense of his current predicament. The last thing he could remember was Alec Peters coming to the hotel room, a sharp pain in the neck and, Oh my God, El! Mike thought trying to stifle his panic. He looked around the room and saw peeled paint on the walls and another chair placed in his front of him. He tried to jump out of his chair and head to the door, but it was as if his feet didn't work. He felt sluggish and his arm moved at an alarmingly slow rate. "Going somewhere Mr. Wheeler?" Sasha said, sitting in the chair across from him. "I don't think you are in any condition as of yet to go anywhere. While you were sleeping I injected you with a drug which slows the motor skills. Makes one not able to think about anything except what I am saying. Now Michael, we can do this easy or I can have my men beat your little girlfriend until I get the answers I seek. ". Sasha nodded to the two men that stood in the room with them for emphasis. "Now tell me what is the Invictus Initiative? And how do your abilities work?"

Hopper closed the space between them but heard a muffled sound and a look of surprise cross the KGB agent's features his eyes went blank and he tumbled to the ground. Hopper saw several holes in the now deceased operative's chest and looked up to see another man who looked very familiar holding a gun with an odd-looking object on the front. "Hello Hopper, always in trouble yeah?" the man said. Hopper jaw dropped open, "Duncan?" "In the flesh. Mate". Hopper went and grabbed Duncan and hugged him tightly. "Damn it's good to see you. Not to be an ass or anything but what the hell are you

doing here?" Duncan smiled at Hopper "Good to see you too, but you uh put on a few pounds, didn't you?" "Ah fuc errr forget you" Hopper said looking at the boys behind him. "Well the reason we're here is kind of a long story." As Duncan spoke he heard a voice in his earpiece say, "We got the girl, she almost killed herself on that skateboard but she's going to be ok I think." "Good bring the girl to my location" Duncan said as he looked to see what his exact location was.

As Duncan gave his people the information to link up with him, Lucas and Dustin peppered Hopper with questions. "Who the hell is this guy, Hop?" Dustin asked. "How do you know him?" Lucas questioned. Hopper sighed and said "I met him while I was on an assignment 12 years ago. And no, I don't want to talk about it." Duncan overheard Hopper talking to the boys and chimed in "Hopper here was point man on an investigation representing the Bureau." Dustin and Lucas both gawked at Hopper "No way you was in the FBI?" Dustin asked. "Yes, a long time ago and I don't like talking about it so drop it, right now." The boys both fell silent. A van pulled up and after side door opened a disheveled Max jumped out. Lucas ran towards her yelling "Max!" Max ran into Lucas's embrace and as he hugged her Max yelped out in pain "Easy stalker, I'm hurting over here". "Sorry Max" Lucas said as Dustin came over to gingerly give her a hug.

Will slowly peered around the corner of the hallway seeing the two rooms in the distance. The room on his left was where Mike was being questioned and about 50 ft closer to Will was the room El laid unconscious in. Will knew he didn't have much time, he would have to wake up El quickly, so she can take the men down. Will moved as fast as he dared, trying to be quiet, each footfall though soft, sounded like heavy thuds to Will. After what seemed like an eternity he made it to the room where El was located. Will rushed to her prone form and started to pat her face, "El wake up!" Will said feverishly. El murmured groggily as Will begun to shake her. "Shit" Will muttered, this wasn't good.

Sasha wasn't a nice man by any stretch of the imagination, but he wasn't necessarily a cruel one either. Sasha wasn't keen on harming children and he hoped his threat to harm El would spur Mike to tell him what he wanted to know, but if he had no other choice he would have the girl beaten to a pulp in front of Mike. Sasha would try his best to not follow the other directive from his bosses; if the boy didn't talk or the location was to be compromised he was instructed to kill the boy and bring his body back to Russia to be dissected. Sasha couldn't believe his ears and argued for a bit but the obstinate man on the other end of the phone, practically sneered as he gave the instruction to Sasha. "Do not give us cause to doubt you Sasha, do as you are told, or we can send Vladimir to come do it, if you are too squeamish." Sasha grudgingly acquiesced to their wishes.

Sasha knew Vladimir being involved in anything would end with a massive body count. The man was a wrecking ball and a thug, but he was gaining influence in the KGB. To be honest if Vladimir was involved, death would be a kindness to these children. Sasha pulled himself out of his memories and asked the question again "What is the Invictus Initiative?"

Mike was stunned, He thinks I'm El! Mike started to think of a way to turn this to his advantage. "Um well I don't remember much, I was being held at a government facility, there was a power outage and I made my way out. I found some kids in the woods and they kinda took me in. I don't know anything about any Invictus stuff" Mike said trying to look earnest. Sasha stared at him as if he was peering into his soul. Sasha nodded to his associates "Get the girl, she is going to pay for you lying to me". Mike screamed "No! I'm telling you the truth I swear! Don't hurt her. Please!" he pleaded. The two men left the room to get El.

"What in the hell is going on Hopper?" Duncan said as an ambulance removed the body of the would-be assassin. Hopper squinted at Duncan "What are you talking about"? "There's a reason why the KGB are sending assassins to kill you mate. It's about the Invictus Initiative and I know you know about it." Hopper's mouth went dry, with all the excitement he didn't think of Jane, Mike and Will at the hotel. "Duncan, we have to get back to the hotel. My daughter and

her friends are there alone, if they came after us, then they damn sure went after them.” Duncan ushered his team into their vehicles as the kids and Hopper climbed into the van Duncan was driving. As Duncan climbed in the driver’s seat one of his fellow operatives radioed in saying “Hey Duncan, we got something on the scanner, a girl called the police about a kidnapping. They are sending cars to the warehouse district, could be the kids you just mentioned.” Duncan sent a team to the hotel just in case as he headed to the warehouse with a backup team. “We’re not far from that location, let the locals know to not move on that spot until I get there” he instructed the team heading to the hotel.

Millie never thought she would find a store with a telephone or a working phone booth. It seemed as if she ran a mile before she came across a pub in which she cajoled the bartender to let her use the phone to call the police. After she completed the call she started her trek back to the warehouse Will and his friends were in. She hoped she wouldn’t return to see three corpses being removed from the warehouse. Her grim thoughts spurred her to run faster.

Will heard movement down the hall and for a moment he had an absurd thought of seeing Mike peek in the door with a goofy smile on his face saying, “the coast is clear”. Will knew the person coming through that door wasn’t Mike, he pulled a groggy El to her feet as she blinked her eyes a few times, “Will? What’s going on?” “We’re in trouble El” Will said as he started pulling her towards the door. He saw one of the KGB operatives freeze as he saw Will and El stumble out the door. “I knew I heard something!” Dmitri said as he pulled a revolver from behind his back. Will and El started to run around the corner of the hall into the open bay; where there was no way out.

Sasha heard Dmitri yell and sent Alexei out the door after him. Sasha looked on with concern, “ I see another one of your friends are here. Quite the resourceful lot you all are.” Sasha raised out of his seat to accompany Alexei when a voice came across Sasha’s radio speaking in Russian, “Sasha we have trouble. I saw police moving into the area. I think they are coming to your location.” Sasha had lookouts placed around the warehouse as they waited for the plane to take them back to Russia to arrive at an airfield about 5 miles from their

location.

“Fall back to this location and prepare for evacuation. This is going to be tricky.” Sasha changed his plans, his man that was shadowing the other children and their guardian didn’t report in and Sasha had to assume he had been neutralized. Sasha entered the hangar and saw a boy holding up the girl by the shoulders. “Will Byers, it is a shame you had to find this location. A real tragedy” Sasha pulled out a silver colored gun and aimed it at Will.

The van carrying Duncan, Hopper, and the kids pulled up to a stop at the entrance to the warehouse district. “Stay in the van and don’t even think of coming out” Hopper said with a stern look. Duncan already exited the vehicle and relayed instructions to the rest of the team. He also waved over the first police officers on the scene. Hopper thought of the previous conversation he had with Duncan on the ride over; he told Duncan of how El came into everyone’s lives and how the cruel experiments and experiences had not broken her and with the help of her friends (who had become like family) she was slowly starting to assimilate to a somewhat normal life. He also detailed what happened to his first daughter.

Duncan listened to the tale somewhat aghast at what happened to this girl and also what happened to Hopper. Duncan told Hopper about how his life changed for the worse after his family died. It was a hell of a catching up story. Hopper walked over to Duncan and the police officer overhearing the cop say, “We saw movement in the building to the right.”. Duncan motioned his people to into position and proceeded to move to the building

No sooner than Hopper told the rest of the Party to stay in the van than all three looked at each other, shrugged and wordlessly left the vehicle. If Hopper thought they were going to sit this one out he was crazy. Lucas, Max and Dustin trailed the main group heading to the warehouse. All three froze and their hearts crept up to their throat when they heard the gunshots.

Hopper almost surged ahead of Duncan and his team when he heard the gunfire and had to be held back by Duncan. “Settle down mate, you can’t do any good if you get shot heading in”. No sooner than he said that bullets headed in their direction. As everyone hit the ground

they saw two sentries at the warehouse firing at them. Duncan returned fire hitting one of the KGB operatives in the chest. One of Duncan's men hit ground nursing a gunshot wound to the abdomen. The other sentry ran inside the warehouse ducking the overwhelming hail of bullets heading his way.

Two minutes earlier, inside the warehouse, Sasha prepared himself to take the life of one (if not two children). It wasn't an easy thing, killing children but he was out of options. As Sasha's finger tightened on the trigger he felt a shove from behind. Wheeler Sasha thought. He was impressed the young man was able to move no less have enough willpower to shove him. Sasha grabbed Mike and tossed him to the floor. Dmitri yelled at Sasha in Russian "We have to go, right now!" Alexei quickly ran to the hotel van and prepared for an immediate evacuation. Sasha remembered his previous instructions; dead or alive Wheeler was coming back to Russia with him. Sasha figured Russian scientists can glean what they can from his corpse. Sasha pivoted and fired three rounds at Mike.

Mike heard the saying about one's life flashing before their eyes before they die but Mike begged to differ; he thought of the moments he would never have. Never going to college, never engaging in another campaign with the Party, never telling El how much she means to him or growing up and marrying her one day. Mike saw Sasha turn and fire the gun at him and numbly thought of Porky Pig saying, "That's all folks!" He closed his eyes and waited for the searing pain and impact that never came. Mike squinted his left eye open and saw three blurry pellets hovering in front of his chest. Mike looked and saw his avenging angel standing next to his best friend with a look of rage and triumph etched in her young features. El's left arm was outstretched towards Sasha while her right was raised behind her. The three blurs suddenly went straight up to the ceiling.

Sasha stood with his mouth agape. He fired three shots point blank range. There should be no way that the boy could be able to focus enough to use his abilities. He could barely walk. Sasha then turned and saw the girl with her hand outstretched. The girl was the one? Sasha thought incredulously. He saw the trickle of blood leak from her nose and realized his mistake. Sasha saw Mike holding the blood-stained tissue and assumed he was the one. Furious at himself he

quickly aimed at El but to no avail. Sasha felt an unseen hand pick him up and slam him into the wall.

El was enraged. She had been drugged, seen her love tossed and almost murdered in front of her eyes, and once again seen her past catch up to her. This man would feel pain like he has never felt in his life before I end it El thought. She focused on the two men behind her and twitched her head to the right, a sound like firecrackers echoed through the warehouse as their kneecaps exploded leaving bloody holes and exposed bone where their knees once were. As Dmitri and Alexei writhed in pain the sentry who traded fire at Duncan and his team ran inside and suddenly he was immobilized before suffering the same fate as his two associates. El then turned to Sasha and walked slowly towards him.

Duncan ran to the warehouse after hearing what sounding like firecrackers go off in the building. He was not prepared for what he saw when he entered with Hopper right on his heels. A girl with her hand outstretched walking towards a man pinned to the wall. Duncan heard the tale of El and what she went through but seeing in her action was a different matter entirely.

Hopper walked towards El saying “Jane, easy now it isn’t worth it. He’s going to pay but you have to let him go”. Lucas, Max and Dustin pushed their way into the warehouse and saw the carnage and walked towards El. Mike slowly walked to El’s side, he remembered what happened the last time he tried to talk to El when she was this focused and mad; he took a telekinetic ride across a room. El closed her left hand into a gripping motion and Sasha grabbed his throat gasping for air.

El heard Mike’s calming words: “El you are not a killer, I know you want to but if you do then you become what Dr. Brenner created you to be, a weapon. Hopper’s right, this asshole is going to pay. Please El, for me.” Mike placed his hand on El’s shoulder “Don’t do this”. El felt her rage ebb from her as she slowly lowered her arm and Sasha slumped to the floor. El walked to him and crouched down to look him in the eyes. “You would have murdered my friends. Thanks to them you are still alive. But if I ever see you again, I will be the last thing you will ever see.” El then twitched her neck to the side as Sasha’s kneecaps exploded outward. El walked away with a smirk

thinking He's lucky it wasn't his neck that was being broken.

The Party were reunited as they shared a group hug together. Will explaining to Dustin, Lucas and Max about how he saw Sasha and his goons kidnap Mike and El. Will told them about how Millie helped and as if on cue he heard Millie yelling outside "Will!" Will ran outside to a warm embrace from the British girl. "Thank God!, I was so worried about you!" Millie exclaimed. Will decided not to tell her about his pants soiling experience in the closet or Sasha almost shooting him. "I'm fine Millie. We got to Mike and Jane in time, that's all that counts. So umm you ready to help me pick out some souvenirs?" Will said sheepishly. Millie shook her head. "But of course, Will, you are a cheeky one, aren't you?" Will walked towards the vehicles thinking I don't have large cheeks. Dustin trailed the group asking the obvious (to him) question "So no one is going to talk about El going Darth Vader on that guy with the force grip?"

The next morning as Hopper, Mr. Clarke (who remained in the dark about the previous days activities) and the Party checked out of the hotel, which had extra security assigned to it. Will and Millie said their goodbyes as Millie tearfully said "I will write you every week. I never had an American pen pal. Who knows maybe one day I will get to visit the US and you can show me around your hometown." Will chuckled, "No I don't think you want to see Hawkins Indiana. Nothing ever happens there".

Duncan and Hopper exchanged farewells, "Good to see you Hopper, even though the circumstances could have been a lot better. You have any ideas on what to do to keep El safe?" Hopper looked at him saying "I think the best bet is to blend in, let her live as normal a life as she can. Keeping her cooped up isn't going to work; trust me I've tried." "Take care mate". "You too Duncan" The two shook hands as Duncan put his bags into the van heading to the airport.

Duncan saw the Hawkins middle school students take off and felt a bit of sadness that his daughter would never have friends like that. That she would be deprived of going to school dances and studying for final exams. Thoughts of his daughter was prevalent in his mind as he drove to his destination. Duncan had received a letter the day prior mentioning the fact that his daughter was alive and a photo of a girl who looked startlingly like what his daughter would look like if

she had lived. The letter told him to find out everything he could about Jane Hopper. If Duncan told anyone about the letter, he would never see his daughter again.

Duncan pulled onto a gravelly road and went to a desolate farmhouse. He walked into the kitchen where he saw a silver haired man with a cane beside him sit at the kitchen table flanked by two other men. "Have a seat Duncan" the silver haired man said. "I'll stand thanks, who the hell are you?" Duncan asked. "My name is Doctor Martin Brenner, and your daughter is in the room behind me. Now tell me what you know about Jane?" Duncan explained that Jane is now known as Jane Hopper, adopted daughter of Sheriff Jim Hopper, and his future plans for her. Duncan also mentioned the recent incident with the Russians. It was this news that made Brenner perk up with interest. "Magnificent" Brenner murmured. "So, I assume she is a big part of this Invictus Initiative I hear people going on about" Duncan asked. Brenner looked at Duncan and nodded, "Yes she has a big part to play but then again so did your wife. Vanessa was a test subject for an experimental program which involved certain drugs designed to unlock the mind's true potential. The men and women who went through the program themselves did not show any new abilities but their children, oh that was a different story."

Duncan felt his throat go dry, he knew where this was heading. "When we found out Vanessa had become pregnant, we had to have the child. You see it was her duty to her country to give that child to us. You have seen the Invictus Initiative play out right in front of your eyes. Those special children will help us win the battle against the Soviet Union. They will help us defeat any enemy that dares to cross us." Brenner sat back in his chair as he waited for Duncan to digest what he said. He saw the anger cross Duncan's face as he went after Brenner "You bastard! You had my wife killed! Didn't you?" Brenner's men tackled Duncan and restrained him. "I did what I had to do Duncan. It was nothing personal I assure you. I had people pull your daughter out of the car before planting an explosive to destroy it entirely. No one would ever suspect emergency responders to carry explosives and dead children's corpses. And now I have given you an opportunity to be reunited with your daughter, with your family. Go see her, you have waited so long". Brenner said pointing at the room in which Naomi rested in.

Duncan calmed himself and walked into the room where he saw an angelic looking blond-haired girl resting. Duncan fell to his knees as he sobbed. She looked so much like his Vanessa. Duncan touched her hair and held her hand. An interesting tattoo caught his attention on her left wrist; it read 003. "Naomi, my sweet little girl what have they done to you?" Duncan asked as he kissed the back of her hand. Duncan told Brenner "I don't care about your project Brenner I'm taking my daughter out of here". "Not quite, but you can tell your wife you saw her and that she's as beautiful as she once was" Brenner said. Duncan heard the muffled shot and a sharp pain as the bullet penetrated his skull. His last thoughts were that of his daughter and that seeing his wife again wasn't such a bad thing. As his body hit the floor, if one would have wiped the blood and brain matter from his face they would have seen a semblance of a smile.

Brenner walked in using his cane, looking at the prone form of the now deceased Duncan Smythe. "Prepare Three for travel and make sure she remains sedated." Brenner leaned forward to wipe some specks of blood from Naomi's face. "We are heading back to Hawkins. Now that the Russians have seen what Eleven can do it is imperative we restart the Initiative. Regardless of what our spineless leaders in the government say." Brenner's men went off to begin preparations as Brenner thought to himself: I'm on my way Eleven, and together we will change the world. I will eliminate anyone who stands in between us, and I know exactly who to eliminate first. Brenner smiled and prepared himself for the work that needed to be done.

Author's Note:

This is my very first attempt at fanfiction. Hope you all enjoy!